



Building a Movement for Play: Non-Profit Organization KaBOOM! Names Greenville Among 217 “Playful City USA” Communities

- Communities Recognized for Prioritizing Play for Children -

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With research proving play is critical to the overall well-being of children, 217 cities and towns, including Greenville, earned recognition from national non-profit KaBOOM! as 2013 Playful City USA communities for their efforts to give children the childhood they deserve by providing ample opportunities for play.

Today’s generation of children play less than any previous generation despite the vast benefits of play. The *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* reports that play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical well-being of children.

Sponsored by the Humana Foundation, Playful City USA is a national program from KaBOOM! that celebrates and promotes local policies that increase play opportunities for children and is a key platform in combating the lack of play among children.

“Everyone in the Greenville Parks and Recreation Department has made significant contributions to the department’s success and our ability to be named a Playful City USA for the third consecutive year,” said Dana Souza, Parks and Recreation Director. “We are proud of this recognition and grateful to the City Council for their continued support to improve and sustain park, recreation and play opportunities for our residents.”

KaBOOM!, the national non-profit organization dedicated to giving kids the childhood they deserve by bringing play to those who need it most, created Playful City USA in 2007 to help local governments address the lack of play and it is through mayors, city council members, parks and recreation departments, school districts and community leaders that the program succeeds in benefitting children.

“Kids need to play actively, every day, at home, in school and in their communities, yet play is disappearing,” said Darell Hammond, Founder and CEO of KaBOOM! and author of *The New York Times* Best Seller [*KaBOOM!: A Movement to Save Play*](#). “Children spend nearly eight hours a day in front of a screen; almost half of all poor students are deprived of recess; and to make matters worse, only one in five children live within walking distance of a park. Playful City USA communities like Greenville are creating innovative programs and initiatives and deserve recognition because of their efforts to give kids the childhood they deserve and best prepare them for their future.”

Hailing from 43 states, the 217 Playful City USA honorees range in size from seven-time honorees such as San Francisco and Spartanburg, S.C., to first-time recipient Ellsworth, Kan. (population: 3,100). These Playful City USA communities are making a commitment to play and physical activity by developing unique local action plans to increase the quantity and quality of play in their community.

In the seventh year of the annual program, 16 Playful City USA communities received recognition for the seventh consecutive year, while 23 earned honors for the sixth time, 25 for the fifth time, 29 for the fourth time, 41 for the third time, 46 for the second time. KaBOOM! recognized 37 communities with their first Playful City USA designation.

For the sixth consecutive year, Florida paced the nation with 32 Playful City USA communities. California earned second-place with 26 communities, while Texas finished third with 15 Playful City USA communities.

Each of the 2013 Playful City USA communities demonstrated creative commitments to addressing the lack of play among children. Playful City USA celebrates and highlights these unique initiatives developed by communities across the country. A primary goal of Playful City USA is to encourage cities and towns to share ideas, concepts and programs in an effort to increase play opportunities for children. City initiatives include:

- Chicago (Ill.) – The city has committed to rebuilding 300 playgrounds during the next five years beginning in 2013 with 50 rebuilt playgrounds, five new parks, two new field houses and major rehabilitation of recreational buildings in 15 different communities. Once the enhancement projects are completed, every child in Chicago will live within a 10-minute walk of a new park or playground.
- Milwaukee (Wis.) – The city recently passed legislation requiring any organization using its facility as an elementary school to have an outdoor playspace for children. The legislation ensures both Milwaukee Public Schools and local charter schools are providing adequate and safe outdoor playspaces for all elementary students.
- Providence (R.I.) – The city originally created the “Playful Providence” program to showcase the importance of play for children. An overwhelming success, in 2013 the city will expand the programming to the entire summer by adding training opportunities and workshops on play and hosting a summer concert series where children are encouraged to play.
- Redwood City (Calif.) – The city has several initiatives through the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department that are intended to increase play opportunities for children. After physical education cuts in local schools, the city applied and received a grant to provide physical education for 5,000 K-5th grade children during the school day.

- Tamarac (Fla.) – The city's parks and recreation department partnered with a local elementary school to create the CATCH Kids Club. The program increases access for play and physical recreation for children and resulted in the school receiving additional funding support for physical education.

KaBOOM! also selected Greenville for its outstanding dedication to play. Greenville partnered with Furman University's Diversity Leadership Institute to equip a box truck with recreational materials. Starting in June 2013, the City's parks and recreation staff will strategically implement this traveling playground across the community.

The 217 Playful City USA communities are now eligible for \$15,000, \$20,000 and \$30,000 grants via Let's Play, a community partnership led by Dr Pepper Snapple Group to get kids and families active nationwide. Grant recipients will be announced in the fall.

For more information on the KaBOOM! Playful City USA program, including Let's Play grants and applications for 2014, visit www.playfulcityusa.org.

About KaBOOM!

KaBOOM! is the national non-profit dedicated to giving kids the childhood they deserve by bringing play to those who need it most. Children today spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation, a fact that is having disastrous consequences on their health, achievement levels, and overall well-being. Social entrepreneur Darell Hammond founded non-profit KaBOOM! in 1996 in Washington, D.C. with a vision of creating a great place to play within walking distance of every child in America because children need to play actively every day at home, in school and in their communities. Since then, KaBOOM! has mapped over 90,000 places to play, built more than 2,200 playgrounds, and successfully advocated for play policies in hundreds of cities across the country. KaBOOM! also provides communities with online tools to self-organize and take action to support play on both a local and national level. Hammond chronicles the founding of the organization and the importance of the cause of play in his *The New York Times* Best Seller [*KaBOOM!: A Movement to Save Play*](#), now out in paperback. The book details how businesses and communities can work together to save play for children across the country. All author proceeds support KaBOOM!. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., KaBOOM! also has an office in San Mateo, Calif. For more information, visit www.kaboom.org.

About the Humana Foundation

The Humana Foundation was established in 1981 as the philanthropic arm of Humana Inc., one of the nation's leading health care companies. Located in Louisville, Ky., the site of Humana's corporate headquarters, the Foundation's mission is to promote healthy lives and healthy communities. The Foundation's key funding priorities are childhood health, intergenerational health, and active lifestyles. For more information, visit www.humanafoundation.org.

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